

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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**THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF THE LATIN BISHOPRICS OF
SYRMIA AND BOSNIA IN THE MEDIEVAL HUNGARIAN
KINGDOM**

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Budapest, 2019

Aims and the structure of the dissertation

In my doctoral dissertation, I attempt to show the history of the bishoprics of Syrmia and Bosnia both located on the southern borderlands of the Kingdom of Hungary, the main target area of Roman Catholic proselytization in the middle ages. Besides the focus on these administrative institutions belonging to the Latin church, I also reveal the careers and lives of the prelates prior to their engagement with these bishoprics as bishops. In line with the sources and the existing literature, I underline the importance of the cathedral chapters of Syrmia and Bosnia and their operation as places of authentication (*locus credibilis*). Moreover, it is essential to include the history of the bishopric of Belgrade as well, since it organically fits into the missionary activities of the Hungarian Church in the Southern borderland. The bishopric of Belgrade was established in 1290 after the consolidation of the bishopric of Syrmia in Macsó. Its aims were to administer the eastern territories in the province of Syrmia Ulterior and foster the proselytization of the indigenous Orthodox population in Belgrade and Barancs. As the current state of research lacks significant information on the bishopric of Belgrade, and our existing knowledge can be easily refuted with the help of the scarce sources that survived. At the same time, these sources seem to be useful for studying the establishment and the unsuccessful missionary activity of the bishopric, therefore this chapter adds relevant information to the expansion of the Hungarian Church in the southern borders of the Kingdom.

However, the main part of the dissertation deals with the medieval history of the bishoprics of Syrmia and Bosnia (Chapter I and II) in the same way: I start with the chronological history of these bishoprics followed by the analysis on the functioning of the cathedral chapters as places of authentication (*locus credibilis*). Finally, I present on the lives and careers of the prelates individually and chronologically. In the appendix of the dissertation, first I show the archontology of the bishops in Belgrad and the archontology of the cathedral chapters of Bosnia, Kő, and Szenternye until 1370 (together with Norbert C. Tóth, I managed to extend these lines of prelates until 1526). These archontologies are followed by the records of the chapters of Kő, Bosnia, and Szenternye – in each case the end of the collection is signified by the year 1353. At the end of the Appendix, there are three spreadsheets containing the study of the so-called *relatio* diplomas of these three cathedral chapters (the date and number of these diplomas are also indicated). The analysis covers the questions of appointments by the chapters: who was appointed by whom (king, palatine, royal judge, the Ban of Macsó) and where (to which county).

The results of the dissertation

The Hungarian King Béla III utilized the internal fights in Byzantium following the death of Manuel Komnenos and conquered Syrmia, Bosnia and the territory called Syrmia Ulterior (south of the rivers Danube and Sava and located between River Drina and the city of Barancs – today Braničevo, Serbia). The aim of the Hungarian Kingdom was to exert influence and control on the local population (in Syrmia people belonged to the Greek rite, in Bosnia the population belonged to the Latin rite in a very special way, however, they were considered as heretics by the Hungarians, Serbians, and the Pope), and the Church played a crucial role in fulfilling this aim: in 1229, the bishopric of Syrmia was established, and from 1238, the archbishopric of Kalocsa managed to slowly incorporate the bishopric of Bosnia.

The bishopric of Syrmia

The bishopric of Syrmia was established by the archbishop of Kalocsa, Ugrin from the Csák family in 1229. This was the first bishopric that was not founded by the king himself. Its capital was Kő (also known as Bánmonostor, today Banoštor, Serbia) in Syrmia, right next to River Danube. At the time of its foundation, every territory of Sirmia Ulterior that was occupied by Hungary belonged to the authority of the bishopric of Syrmia. From the beginning, the bishopric operated as an independent one. In 1241 the bishop's seat in Kő was destroyed and the Pope appointed Szenternye (today Mačvanska Mitrovica, Serbia, located opposite of Sremska Mitrovica) as the new seat in 1247. Here a new cathedral chapter was established consecrated for Martyr Saint Ernye and around 1250 the seat in Kő was rebuilt, therefore from that point on, the bishopric had two seats and two cathedral chapters.

In 1247 the ousted prince of Halics, Rostislav Mihailovich obtained Sirmia Ulterior (south of River Sava and Danube) from his father-in-law and started to consolidate the Hungarian influence in the area. Part of this process was the appointment of the new seat of the bishopric in Szenternye. By the 1250s, the territory of Sirmia Ulterior probably shrank to the area limited by the rivers of Drina, Sava, and Kolubara and consolidated there. The sources called this area as the district of Macsó from 1254 and the missionary activity of the bishopric of Syrmia concentrated on this limited territory. As there are no sources at hand from the 13th century concerning the bishopric and there is a tangible lack of research on the administrative history of the territories south of the River Sava and Danube, my dissertation aims to address

this hiatus. The growing importance of Hungarian presence here might provide some details on the emergence of the seats of the archdeaconry in Macsó or the position of Szenternye of the Transsavan region as the place of residence for the bishop by the beginning of the 14th century.

Due to Rostislav, the Hungarian presence in the areas of Belgrade, Barancs and Kucsó were established. After his death, his sons inherited these vast territories and attempted to reorganize them as Hungarian banats. From 1284 the ousted Serbian king, Stephen Dragutin obtained Bosnia, Macsó, Belgrade and Barancs. With the aim of strengthening the Hungarian influence and practicing ecclesiastical control over the Belgrade-Barancs area, the Latin bishopric of Belgrade was created in 1290. This was tasked with the missionary activity in the eastern side of Sirmia Ulterior, however, this proved to be ineffective, thus from the mid-14th century, Belgrade was only an honorary bishopric until 1526. The missionary activity conducted by the bishopric of Syrmia was terminated by a Serbian incursion (or a series of incursions that is closely not known) around 1330. At that time, the members of the chapter in Szenternye were expelled (the chapter itself ceased to exist after 1396) and after this period there were constant financial and political problems to reestablish the Hungarian presence in the area. Subsequent to the battle at Kosovo Polje in 1389 the Ottoman conquest thwarted any missionary attempts around Macsó.

The bishopric of Bosnia

Bosnia consisted of impenetrable forests and mountains, its roads were difficult to use and had only secondary importance from a commercial point of view. Due to these factors, Bosnia was not an appealing target for occupation for any neighboring powers in the 12th century. Its Slavic population was under the authority of a nominally Catholic bishop under the archbishop of Ragusa. Owing to its isolated position, there was no clerical hierarchy in this province, which resulted in the free amalgamation of Greek and Latin rites and different pagan and heretic beliefs. In contrast with the solid standpoint of research, Bosnians cannot be regarded as Bogomils and not even heretics in the narrow sense of the word: they were simply not aware of the fact that their practices were not in line with the Latin rite. When Ban Kulin managed to foster economic development in Bosnia following the death of emperor Manuel Komnenos, the lack of clerical presence became an even more striking problem than before. With reference to this, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Pope tried to increase their influence in Bosnia in the 1230s. Dominicans were tasked to consolidate the conditions for the church.

By pontifical mediation, a Dominican called János Német became appointed as the bishop of Bosnia in 1234–1235 and after his resignation, he was followed by Pósa, a Hungarian Dominican in 1238. Pósa started to build a cathedral and a chapter in Ban Brdo that was probably the ecclesiastical center of Bosnia at that time. However, the support for Pósa's activity ran dry as after the death of his main supporters such as Ugrin from the Csák family and Prince Kálmán and the destruction caused by the Mongols deteriorated the conditions for maintaining his position in Bosnia. Consequently, Pósa had to return to his lands in Diakóvár (obtained from Prince Kálmán, today Đakovo, Croatia) around 1250. In 1247, the Pope subordinated the bishopric of Bosnia from the authority of Ragusa to the archbishop of Kalocsa, however, the Hungarian authority consolidated only by the beginning of the 14th century. Until the 1230s, the bishop of Bosnia worked alongside the ban, he could be appointed only from the Bosnian Slavic community and was the spiritual leader of the local "Catholics". When Pósa relocated his seat to Diakóvár around 1250, the Bosnians established their own church that can be regarded as a heretic. This was the Bosnian Church that defined itself as opposed to the Latin church established in Bosnia before.

The Franciscan order appeared in Bosnia in 1298 and started to challenge the position of the order of the preachers in the Bosnian inquisition. The legal action resulted in the victory of the Franciscans, Dominicans had to give up the inquisitional activity. In 1339 the Franciscan Vicary of Bosnia was established and from this point on – in its every form and task – the grey friars de facto represented the Catholic church in the province. In order to finance their activities in Bosnia, the Franciscans tried to obtain the right to tithe from the bishop, however, they were unsuccessful to do so even if it is probable that the bishop had no means to collect tithe in Bosnia. Under the bishopric of Peregrin of Szászföld (the former, first Franciscan vicar of Bosnia) between 1349 and 1356 the bishopric of Bosnia (territory) and the bishop of Bosnia (person) united for the last time. After Peregrin, in the case of Péter Szapolyai, there might be some connection between the bishop and Ban Tvrtko, but after 1376, there was definitely no connection between the bishop of Bosnia and his province. At the beginning of the 15th century, the Franciscans attempted to establish a Franciscan counter-bishopric in Bosnia, this one would have been the Visoko-Szebernik province, but its name shows up only a few times in the (Franciscan) sources, after that there is no mentioning of this plan at all. Therefore after 1250, the bishopric of Bosnia de iure in a wider sense covered the territories of the Bosnian province and the lands around Diakóvár in Valkó county, however, the bishop was de facto capable of exercising his rights only in the latter. This situation made Bosnia the smallest and the poorest bishopric in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. To amend the

problem of constant financial needs, the Bosnian cathedral chapter obtained the right to countrywide range in 1498, thereby reaching the position of the places of authentication (*locus credibilis*) of Fehérvár and Óbuda legally, it did not prove enough for overcoming the economic decline.

In the cases of both bishoprics mentioned above, it can be said that bishops without diocese could concentrate on their political careers in the royal court, they could take part in the formation of countrywide policies and conducted diplomatic services.